



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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May 10, 1979

Mr. William Hohri

Dear Bill:

I just returned from a journey to the East Coast. On my way out I did stop by to meet JACLers from Dayton, Cincinnati and Indianapolis.

In March I sat in on the Redress Committee meeting. For two days the Committee deliberated on the question of whether to go or not go the Commission route.

There seemed to be no question in each member's mind that if this was a matter which affected only himself, he would go the direct appropriation route, and if defeated at least have the satisfaction of knowing that he tried. He would have eased his personal conscience that he did not waver, that he had done his part, that if it failed it would no longer be his fault but that of the Congress.

Many stated, however, that this was too easy a way out. In easing one's own conscience he had not taken into consideration his responsibility to the Japanese American community.

The political reality, it was stated, is to keep the issue alive with a viable bill. Here, the long years of legislative experience cannot be ignored. We were told that an appropriation bill's chance of surviving the numerous committee referrals and eventually the Congress is small. The Commission Bill's chance of passage is infinitely greater, it was stated. Once the Commission Bill is passed the opportunity to discuss redress issue before the American public is greatly enhanced. This public discussion, it was felt, is essential to educate both the American public and the Congress.

It was stated that the Redress issue in itself is not being compromised. Another approach is being tried to reach the same goal, only because its chance of success is so much greater than the direct appropriation approach which is given very little chance of even a short term survival at this time. Should we go against the advices of those in Congress whose support is vital in the passage of the bill and sacrifice the whole redress issue? It is a serious consideration which must be viewed practically and in reality.

In all respect to Congressman Sidney Yates, his political survival is not affected by this bill as it would the Nikkei members of Congress.

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Knowing this the Nikkei legislators are willing to put their political future on the line for us. That is commitment.

What they are saying to us is that political reality states that direct appropriation does not have a chance of survival, that it can be killed off quickly and with relative ease. A Commission route, they feel, will keep the redress issue alive so we will have more time to educate the American public and fight for redress. This is what they are saying. Neither they, nor the Committee, are saying that the pursuit of redress ought to be dropped. Both are convinced that redress should be pursued.

All the activities you had planned for the redress campaign become important when the bill passes. Any bill presented, which becomes locked in committees or is quickly killed on the floor of the Congress, will give us no opportunity to openly campaign to educate both the public and the Congress.

The Commission idea was born in the act of 1) seeking survival of the redress issue before Congress, and 2) giving us time to launch an effective public education campaign. The Commission was never taken as an resolution to the redress issue.

Two of the three attorneys on the Committee felt that the mandate of the National Council is not contravened, that the direction toward achieving the mandate was changed to keep the issue from being killed off.

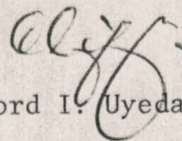
A committee decision, after careful and long deliberation, cannot be ignored. What would be Seattle's reaction if the direct appropriation was voted in at the committee and then those opposed to it from the committee went home and began a campaign to reverse the decision? There is no end to this type of in-fighting. The committee had to make a hard decision; it was made; and it is time to keep moving forward.

JACL has been faced with many difficult issues. The Committee has no reason for existing if it cannot function after difficult and painful decisions. Redress is not under question, the method of achieving redress certainly is.

I may not have answered you to your satisfaction, but I have tried to explain some of the thoughts that went into the Committee decision. I am fully cognizant of your concerns and share many with you. The Committee had a difficult decision to make, and made it after careful deliberations.

I appreciate your writing to me.

Sincerely yours,



Clifford I. Uyeda.